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SIPDIS

G/TIP FOR BARBARA FLECK, JANE SIGMON, AND MARK FORSTROM

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [ELAB](#) [KCRM](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [SMIG](#) [KWMN](#) [PGOV](#) [AR](#)

SUBJECT: ARGENTINA: VISITING G/TIP AMBASSADOR PRESENTS
ANTI-TIP ACTION PLAN AND HAS "PRODUCTIVE CONVERSATION" WITH
FM TAIANA

REF: SECSTATE 64746

¶1. (SBU) Summary. On June 19, Ambassador Wayne and visiting Ambassador-at-Large and Director of the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons Mark P. Lagon called on Foreign Minister Jorge Taiana to discuss Argentina's efforts to combat trafficking in persons (TIP). Drawing from the TIP action plan in ref A, Lagon presented recommendations on how to strengthen Argentina's anti-TIP efforts, urging implementation and enforcement of Argentina's new federal anti-trafficking law, increased prosecutions of human traffickers and complicit officials, and increased assistance for trafficking victims. Lagon also offered USG cooperation in the fight against TIP. Taiana acknowledged that TIP is a problem in Argentina, but stated that the new federal law will be a valuable tool in investigating and prosecuting human trafficking rings. Taiana reiterated GOA "dissatisfaction with the TIP report, adding that it was hard to believe that the report was not 'political' when Argentina, Suriname, and Venezuela are all on the Department's Tier 2 Watch List. Lagon acknowledged that he knew the TIP Report can be seen as an irritant, but indicated that "clearly Argentina has taken a step forward." Lagon indicated that the USG values Argentina's partnership in the fight against TIP, and stated that "the United States is willing to share best practices on these matters." Taiana thanked him for the "productive conversation" and told Lagon that he "came at the right time to tackle the matter." End summary.

Participants

¶2. (SBU) On June 19, Ambassador Wayne and visiting Ambassador-at-Large and Director of the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons Mark P. Lagon called on Argentine Foreign Minister Jorge Taiana to discuss Argentina's efforts to combat trafficking in persons (TIP). The Foreign Minister was accompanied by Director General for Bilateral Affairs Vicente Espeche Gil, Special Envoy for Women's Affairs Magdalena Faillace, Office Director for North American Affairs Antonio Trombetta, and U.S. desk officer Counselor Claudio Rojas. Ambassadors Wayne and Lagon were accompanied by G/TIP Reports Officer Barbara Fleck and poloff (notetaker).

FM: TIP Increasingly Relevant in Argentina

¶3. (SBU) "Trafficking in persons is unfortunately increasingly relevant in Argentina", Minister Taiana began. He explained that, according to a report by the International Organization for Migration, it appears that Argentina's main TIP problem is internal trafficking of Argentine women for the purposes of sexual exploitation. Victims of labor

exploitation seem to be mostly Bolivians and Paraguayans, and Peruvians to a lesser extent. Taiana explained that before the passage of anti-TIP legislation in April, provincial authorities were responsible for investigating TIP and the federal government could not intervene. Lack of investigations and convictions at the provincial level gave the impression that there is a high tolerance for the problem. Now that Argentina has passed a federal law criminalizing TIP, it will be a valuable tool in investigating and prosecuting human trafficking rings. Still, Argentina will need to modify its penal code and develop implementing regulations, he explained.

Lagon: Raises Action Plan Points

¶4. (SBU) After noting the valuable measures Argentina is taking to fight human trafficking, such as putting in place a new federal law, pursuing more law enforcement actions against traffickers on the provincial level, and taking steps to raise public awareness, Lagon addressed with the FM several elements in Argentina's Tier 2 Watch List action plan. (See Reftel, para 9.) Lagon noted that Argentina's recent enactment of federal anti-trafficking legislation posed the hard challenge of implementing and enforcing the new law, particularly in terms of prosecuting those responsible for exploiting victims, in addition to the sensitive issue of prosecuting complicit officials on the local or provincial level who may be involved with trafficking crimes. Lagon noted that official complicity with human trafficking is a problem found across the globe, and pledged USG assistance where possible to tackle this

difficult concern, which is often a catalyst for human trafficking. Lagon also noted the importance of providing greater victim protection through shelters and social services, and increasing efforts to find and rescue victims in brothels and sweatshops.

Lagon: Important to Dig Deeper to Find Victims and to Maintain Data

¶5. (SBU) On the labor front, Taiana stated that the GOA's 2006 "Gran Patria" plan, whereby undocumented immigrants can regularize their immigration status in Argentina, has helped to improve the situation as undocumented workers are more vulnerable to trafficking for labor exploitation purposes. Ambassador Lagon noted that it is important to identify ways in which migrants can be vulnerable to TIP. He stated that U.S. policy is to provide immigration relief to TIP victims so that they do not fear coming forward to denounce the traffickers. He added that it is important for law enforcement authorities to dig deeper when interviewing potential victims, particularly adults. Victims may appear to have consented at first, but may have lost control over their lives along the way. "Law enforcement officers should see if consent has disappeared over time," he stated. Lagon also noted that tracking information and data about trafficking cases and victims provides a valuable tool to governments, and does not just represent a request from the USG to prepare the TIP Report. The FM agreed that data collection is a key element of accounting, and that the GOA regularly gathers such information for the U.S. Human Rights Report and UNESCO. The FM further agreed that maintaining accurate data is helpful for a government's own purposes, to determine future policies and actions.

Lagon: Inter-agency coordination is key

¶6. (SBU) Special Envoy for Woman's Issues Ambassador Magdalena Faillace reported that she recently attended an informal interagency meeting to discuss how the new law would

be implemented. In addition, MERCOSUR has taken up the issue, as human trafficking is a regional problem. At the MOJ-sponsored MERCOSUR Congress on TIP and Child Pornography in early June, participants noted that there is a need for dedicated TIP victim shelters that are different from shelters for domestic violence victims. "We are working on the issue", she stated. Lagon underscored the importance of inter-agency coordination in the fight against TIP, adding that he chairs an inter-agency working group to coordinate domestic and international efforts to combat TIP, and emphasized that the USG struggles with its own human trafficking problems. He explained that the U.S. evaluates its own efforts to fight TIP and issues annual recommendations on how best the USG can improve.

FM: Rankings appear to be "Political"

¶7. (SBU) Taiana stated that the GOA was "very dissatisfied" with the U.S. assessment, adding that it was hard to believe that the report was not "political" when only Argentina, Suriname, and Venezuela are the only countries in the Western Hemisphere (WHA) that are on the Department's Tier 2 Watch List. (Note: He was mistaken. There are seven WHA countries, including Argentina, on the Tier 2 Watch List in the 2008 TIP Report; Suriname is ranked on Tier 2. End Note.) He wondered out loud if practice and problems regarding TIP were really better in places like the Dominican Republic or Mexico compared to Argentina. He said he found this hard to believe. He stated emphatically that Argentina is a country that respects human rights and that is very open about its problems. He noted that Argentine public awareness of the problem has reached new levels as a result of "Vidas Robadas", a popular television series loosely based on TIP activist Susana Trimarco's efforts to find her daughter who is believed to be a trafficking victim. "Even my wife watches the show," he said.

Lagon: Report can be irritant, but notes progress too

¶8. (SBU) Lagon suggested that the TIP Report aims to be objective and explained that the U.S. Congress has mandated that the State Department produce its annual report evaluating the efforts of foreign governments to fight human

trafficking. He also acknowledged that the Report can be seen as an irritant because it grades countries, but that the Report also recognizes progress. "Clearly Argentina has taken a step forward," he said.

Lagon: USG values Argentina's partnership

¶9. (SBU) Lagon noted that the USG values Argentina's partnership in the fight against TIP. He added that the new TIP law would be valuable in that effort, but emphasized that the hard part is enforcing the law. At the end of the meeting, he presented a copy of the text of the TIP action plan specified in reftel, para 9, to Minister Taiana, saying that, in an effort to be transparent about what was relevant to future rankings, "these are the things we think would be the most helpful." Lagon also noted that "the United States is willing to share best practices on these matters." In closing the meeting, Taiana thanked him for the "productive conversation" and told Lagon that he "came at the right time to tackle the matter."

¶10. (U) Ambassador Lagon cleared on this cable.
WAYNE